

Tina Brown
Junior COSTEP-Summer 2006
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Albuquerque Service Unit, New Mexico
Albuquerque Area IHS



Hello, my name is Tina Brown and I am a native of the beautiful Lexington, Kentucky. Currently, I am a junior with a major in Environmental Health Science and minor in Spanish at Eastern Kentucky University. I first learned about the COSTEP program from a former COSTEP, DaJuane Harris, who is a good friend and classmate of mine. I then asked my mentors and the professors within the EHS department whom all made it sound interesting and let it be known that it was very much in my best interest to apply. So I took what they said to heart, and applied. I later found it is one of the best decisions I've ever made.

I was chosen to serve my term as a COSTEP in Albuquerque, New Mexico under AIH Sup-Sanitarian Robert Bates. When I reported to duty June 2nd, I was received with warm smiles and greetings from all the staff. After the greetings I soon found just how vast the opportunities for learning through hands on experience would be during my stay. The Albuquerque Service Unit provides services for the six tribes of Sandia, Santa Ana, Isleta, Jemez, Ysleta Del Sur, and Zia. Throughout the summer we conducted surveys and reports of various facilities within reservation areas such as casinos, convenience stores, daycares, food warehouses, pools and spas, senior citizen centers, and water and

sewer systems. We also set up rabies clinics where I had to personally give animals vaccinations shots. This is something that was brand new to me and needles themselves make me tense. Yet, I got over that feeling once I realized how simple and easy it was to do.

In addition to the field work duties, I was also given a project to complete. The project involved Standard Five of the FDA Voluntary National Retail



Food Regulatory Program Standards which deals with the investigation, response, and review of foodborne illness outbreaks. My challenge was to analyze each requirement of Standard Five, compare it to the Albuquerque Area Operating Guidelines, and provide recommendations of how to get the Epidemiology section of the Albuquerque Area Operating Guidelines up to standard with Standard Five of the FDA code. This proved to be a difficult task since Standard Five is the most demanding out of all nine standards. However, I took this task head on. By doing so I gained experience in documenting policies, procedures, and forms, interviewing Albuquerque Health Department and IHS officials, and collaborating effectively with other staff within the workplace. I was also able to perfect my presentation skills since I was required to present my findings in front of my peers, staff, and high ranking officials within the IHS Albuquerque Area.

Even though I was busy at work, I was able to see and experience a lot of what the southwest had to offer. I was literally amazed at the tribal feast days where I saw several types of intricate, colorful ceremonial dances. I also enjoyed the hospitality of the Native women including the ASU Injury Prevention Specialist, Debby Chavez, who invited us into their homes to feast on their delicious food. As far as local entertainment I was able to ride the Sandia Tram of Albuquerque, aka “Longest Tram in the World,” at two and



half miles long and approximately 10,000 ft elevation. I danced the night away at the “Salsa Under the Stars” at the Albuquerque Museum of Art Amphitheatre. I also went to both Old Towns of Albuquerque and Santa Fe where I shopped and dined in their fine shops and restaurants.

Initially, I was extremely nervous about this experience. When I first received the call from my preceptor, Robert Bates, saying I would have to go all the Albuquerque, New Mexico, I

was like, “Dang that’s far.” I knew this experience would be very beneficial, but I am definitely a homebody and always will be. Yet, had I not taken advantage of this opportunity, I would have missed out on so many things that I would most likely not experienced had I not come. Therefore, if you are a person like me who is nervous about leaving home: TAKE A CHANCE! Never be afraid to take advantage of an opportunity. If you are a student interested in the EHS field or other health sciences, then I definitely recommend that you take a chance on the COSTEP Program.